

## OBITUARY

**Count Kazimierz Antoni Z Granowa Wodzicki**

OBE, PhD, DSc, FRSNZ

1900-1987



Dr Wodzicki (left) and the late Keith Hindwood birdwatching near Sydney, c. 1941

Dr Wodzicki, known as Kazio to his many friends throughout New Zealand and overseas, died peacefully at his home in Wellington on 15 June 1987. He was 87.

Born and educated in Poland, Dr Wodzicki came to New Zealand in 1941 to serve as Consul-General for the exiled Polish Government in London. He and his family had miraculously escaped to Britain when the Germans invaded Poland, where he had been Professor of Anatomy and Histology at the University College of Agriculture in Warsaw. Before leaving Poland

he had published 39 research papers on topics ranging from the anatomy and reproductive physiology of poultry to the neolithic and medieval goats of Poland, but his main interest was in birds, particularly the ecology and migration of storks.

Despite the busy and stressful life of a war-time diplomat, Dr Wodzicki found time to pursue his ornithological interests in New Zealand. He is listed as a member of the Ornithological Society in the Annual Report for 1940-41, and, on 21 September 1941, in company with C.A. Fleming and the late A.A. Kirk, he made the first of his many visits to the Waikanae River estuary near Wellington. He was a frequent contributor to *N.Z. Bird Notes* (later *Notornis*) from 1942 onwards. (Although he held the title of Count, he preferred in New Zealand to use his academic title of Doctor.)

At the end of the war, when Poland fell under the Russian sphere of influence, Dr Wodzicki could no longer represent his country as a diplomat, and he did not wish to return there. The New Zealand Government found work for him in DSIR investigating the problems caused by the various introduced mammals that inhabited New Zealand's farmlands, forests and mountain lands. This work, published in 1950 as DSIR Bulletin No. 98 *Introduced Mammals of New Zealand - An Ecological and Economic Survey*, led to the establishment of the Animal Ecology Section of DSIR (now Ecology Division, DSIR) and Dr Wodzicki became its first Director.

Although the Section was primarily concerned with mammals, Dr Wodzicki catered for his ornithological interests by working extra hours and he encouraged his staff to do likewise; thus, work on gannets, rooks and ornithological surveys continued along with research on various aspects of the rabbit problem. His retirement from DSIR in 1965 represented little more than a comma in his life of research. He soon turned his attention to the problem of how to control rat damage of coconuts in the Tokelau Islands and later in Niue. True to his character, and despite the demands of the rodent work, he found time to be interested in, and to publish on rodent parasites, land crabs, fruit bats and birds. Back in New Zealand he worked on his material in the Zoology Department of Victoria University, where he was an Honorary Lecturer, and at the National Museum, where he was an Honorary Research Associate. At the time of his death he had no less than 138 scientific publications to his credit. A list of these is held in the library of Ecology Division, DSIR.

Among his many ornithological contributions (often published jointly with colleagues), the studies of bird life at Waikanae Estuary and of the gannets at Cape Kidnappers were especially significant because they were continued over many years, thus allowing the detection of important changes. The Waikanae Estuary surveys, first published in 1946 and with the help of Max Falconer repeated in 1978, recorded in detail the changes that occurred in the birdlife as new houses encroached on the nearby sandhills and as the estuary and its adjacent beaches were subjected to greatly increased human use. The work on gannets was even more productive. In 1946-47, with Dr C.A. Fleming, Dr Wodzicki censused the gannet population of New Zealand by counting occupied nests shown on aerial photographs and

checking the results by ground visits to some of the gannetries. This was the first full census of any New Zealand seabird. Another first in gannet research came from Dr Wodzicki's banding operations, which revealed the previously quite unsuspected fact that young New Zealand gannets disperse to Australian seas within a few days of leaving their natal colonies. Yet another surprise came when, in 1969-70 and again in 1980-81, Dr Wodzicki and his co-workers repeated the gannet census and found that the population had been increasing at the rate of 2.3% per year since 1946-47. Apart from his own personal research, Dr Wodzicki had an important influence on New Zealand ornithology by encouraging and supporting the work of other people, particularly the members of his staff in Ecology Division and, later, the graduate students he helped supervise at Victoria University.

While it seems appropriate for this journal to emphasise Dr Wodzicki's ornithological achievements, it must not be forgotten that he made equally important contributions in other branches of zoology. These, together with his ornithological work, were recognised when he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of New Zealand in 1962, awarded an Honorary DSc by Victoria University in 1980, and made an Honorary Life Member of the New Zealand Ecological Society in 1984.

But science was not his only activity. As Polish Consul-General he assisted his late wife, the Countess Maria Wodzicka, in persuading the New Zealand Government to accept a large number of Polish war refugees, mostly children, and to set up a special camp near Pahiatua to provide for their needs. The Wodzickis continued their interest in these children as they grew up and had families of their own. In this way, and by his personal interest in the New Zealand way of life, Dr Wodzicki did much to foster the understanding and respect the two cultures now have for each other. Dr Wodzicki's services to New Zealand, both cultural and scientific, were recognized publicly in 1976 when he was awarded the OBE. Sadly, his gracious and talented wife, who had contributed so much to the Polish community in New Zealand, had died before this honour was bestowed.

Dr Wodzicki's achievements did not come easily. Born into an aristocratic land-owning family and accustomed to the help of servants, he was perhaps ill-equipped to survive with modest means in the New Zealand do-it-yourself society. Yet survive he did despite having to cope with a lengthy illness in 1956. He not only learnt to look after himself in the field in New Zealand and on remote Pacific islands but also became quite an accomplished cook in his own kitchen. His dignity, impeccable manners and personal charm enabled him to make friends with people from all walks of life. He applied some of the skills acquired as a diplomat to help him survive in the New Zealand Public Service, where he showed an astonishing capacity to circumvent obstructions and get funding for his research.

Dr Wodzicki was a faithful attender at meetings of the Wellington Branch of OSNZ and rarely did a speaker escape without a question from Dr Wodzicki, or more often several questions delivered all at once. He was always ready to compliment good work but equally ready to voice constructive criticism of work he considered shoddy. Although he will be

missed by his many friends, we can rejoice in his long life of achievement, most of it preserved in print for future generations, and in the privilege many of us have had in enjoying Kazio's friendship and his company on bird-watching outings.

The Society extends its sympathy to Dr Wodzicki's daughter, Professor Manika Cockrem of Bogor, Indonesia; to his son Professor Jontek Wodzicki of Washington State University, Bellington, U.S.A.; and to his seven grandchildren.

P. C. Bull



## NOTICE

The Deutsche Ornithologen-Gesellschaft will hold its 100th annual meeting as the "International 100th Annual Meeting" September 24 to October 1, 1988 at the Museum Alexander Koenig in Bonn, West Germany. The two key themes will be Zoogeography & Systematics and Behavioral Ecology. All interested in participating should contact:

**Dr K. -L. Schuchmann,  
Museum Alexander Koenig,  
Adenauerallee 150-164,  
D-5300 Bonn,  
Federal Republic of Germany.**